

Remarks

Claims 1-9 are pending. Claims 1 and 4 are amended to clarify the orientation of the recited slots. Support for the amendments can be found in the specification, *inter alia*, at Figs. 9A, 9B, 11A and 11B. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been added.

Based on the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections and passage of the claims to allowance.

Request to Correct Inventorship

On September 22, 2004, Applicants filed a Request and Fee to Correct Inventorship Under 37 CFR 1.48(a). Upon a check of PAIR, there is no indication that the Patent Office has acted on that Request. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request consideration of the September 22, 2004 Request to Correct Inventorship (received by the Patent Office on September 24, 2004). Please contact the undersigned if there is any further information required or if there is a problem with the Request.

Objections to the Drawings

As best understood by the Applicants, Figs. 6A and 6B were objected to because of the nature of the grayscale copy of the figures. Applicants submit amended Figs. 6A and 6B with grayscale features that attempt to provide a more significant gradient difference. However, if the grayscale feature is still deemed unacceptable in the amended drawings, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned to further address this objection.

In addition, the figures were objected to as allegedly not showing the limitation in claim 3, presumably "...wherein the at least one slot comprises a first slot cut through the first member at a first location along said gripping region and a second slot cut through the first member at a second location spaced apart from the first location...." Applicants respectfully submit that Fig. 9A shows an illustration of one embodiment of this recited feature. As shown in Fig. 9A, first slot 71A and second slot 71B, each cut through the first member, are spaced apart from each other, defining an inner clamping zone 74 between the slots and separate outer clamping zones

77A and 77B outside the slots. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn as the Figures show the aforementioned feature that is specified in claim 3.

§ 102 Rejections

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Patterson (US 5,102,212). Claims 4-9 were also rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Patterson. Applicants are familiar with Patterson, which was cited in the Background section, as this patent is owned by the assignee of the present application. Applicants respond as follows.

Patterson does not disclose each and every element of the claimed invention. With respect to claims 1-3, Patterson does not disclose "...wherein the sheet of material further comprises at least one slot oriented transverse to a direction of a length of said gripping region to define separate clamping zones along the length of said gripping region."

Instead, Patterson discloses a splice element (*see* Fig. 15) that includes three separate surfaces contacting the fiber (78, 79, 86) that are separated by longitudinal channels 84 and 85 (i.e., oriented axially with the fiber). As such, there are no slots formed transverse to a direction of a length of the gripping region.

In contrast, as shown in the examples of Figs 9A, 9B, 11A, and 11B, claims 1-3 recite slots formed transversely to the direction of the gripping region.

With respect to claims 4-9, Patterson does not disclose "...wherein the sheet of material further comprises at least one slot oriented transverse to a direction of a length of said gripping region to define separate clamping zones along the length of said gripping region, wherein a first clamping zone includes a splicing region and a second clamping zone includes a buffer clamping region."

Instead, Patterson discloses (*see e.g.*, Patterson's Figs. 11 and 13) concave recesses 80, 81, 94 and 95, located on surfaces 90 and 91. However, these concave recesses are not used to clamp fiber, but instead to funnel or guide the fiber into the clamping grooves, 78, 79 and 86, located on plate 75. *See e.g.*, Patterson, col. 7, lines 65 *et seq.* -

The recesses 94 and 95 cooperate with the concave recesses 80 and 81, and the conical surfaces to define funnel-shaped fiber guiding openings for directing the fiber ends to the fiber receiving passageway defined by the surfaces 78, 79 and 86, when the first and second plate-like legs 74 and 75 are folded to form said fiber receiving passageway. The funnel-shaped openings and the slight crown along the length of the

surfaces 78, 79 and 86 guide the fiber ends into the passageway and position them to be properly aligned when the element is closed.

Thus, the alleged slots of Patterson are not used to form separate "clamping" zones, as is required in claims 4-9, but rather to form funnel shaped guides to lead the fiber(s) into the v-groove clamping region formed by surfaces 78, 79 and 86, shown in Fig. 16. *See also* Patterson, col. 8, lines 8-27, where it is described that wings 90 and 91 are first folded onto leg 74, the fibers are then inserted into the funnel guides (*i.e.*, the fiber is not gripped by these guiding regions), then legs 74 and 75 are moved together to tightly clamp the fibers. As is apparent from Patterson, there is no structure provided that clamps the buffer coating of the fiber. Accordingly, Patterson does not disclose transverse slots that define a buffer clamping region as is recited in claims 4-9.

For at least the reasons above, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentable over the cited art. In summary, the rejections of claims 1-9 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Patterson have been overcome and should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

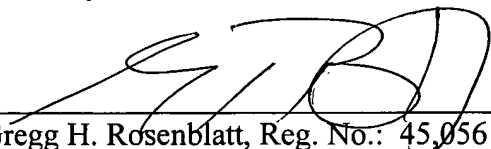
In view of the above, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is requested. Please contact the undersigned should there be any questions or in order to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

9/1/05

Date

By:



Gregg H. Rosenblatt, Reg. No.: 45,056
Telephone No.: (512) 984-7443

Office of Intellectual Property Counsel
3M Innovative Properties Company
Facsimile No.: 651-736-3833

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figs. 6A and 6B, to replace the original sheet 4/9.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet 4/9